

SOME INFORMATION REGARDING
THE
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL
DURBAN

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

In 1954, the University of Natal, aware of its strategic position in an exceptionally rich and varied field of human relations, established the Institute for Social Research for the purpose of doing and stimulating research in the social problems of its environment.

The Institute approached its task with a dual emphasis: (a) the interdisciplinary or teamwork approach to social problems; (b) the training of young graduates as qualified and experienced research workers in this field.

The University itself provided the necessary accommodation for scholars and equipment, and encouraged its academic staff to participate in the Institute's activities.

In 1957 it appointed a full-time Director to the Institute and made him a member of the University Senate and of the Board of the Faculty of Social Science.

Sponsors:

The Institute has received powerful support:-

- a) The Carnegie Corporation of New York allocated funds which, among other things, financed the visits, during 1954-56, of four eminent American scholars:-

Professor E. de S. Brunner, Rural Sociology, Columbia University;
Professor Charles R. Nixon, Political Science, University of California;
Professor Wilbur C. Hallenbeck, Urban Sociology, Columbia University;
Professor Gordon W. Allport, Social Psychology, Harvard University.

These social scientists served as Consultants to the Institute, actively participating in the planning and supervision of research projects, taking a lively part in joint seminars, and generally helping to put the Institute on its feet.

Carnegie funds also enabled the Institute to establish a number of research bursaries for graduate African, Indian and European scholars, and lately, a senior research Fellowship.

- b) The Ford Foundation gave a generous grant which made it possible for the Institute to acquire the necessary sorting equipment (among others, a 40-column Powers-Samas punching machine and verifier, and a Monroe-Matic calculator) and furnishings. A four-wheel-drive station wagon and camping equipment enables the Institute to extend its research activities into the rural areas.

Of immense value was the generous allocation, from Ford funds, for books in the various social disciplines. Placed in the University Library for the use

of academic staff and students generally, these books may be regarded as a valuable contribution from the Institute to the University as a whole.

Ford funds also made possible the organisation of two important social science conferences (1954, 1956) on a national scale, thus making it possible for the Institute to create a forum for inter-university discussions on social problems of national importance.

- c) The National Council for Social Research, by creating six senior research scholarships and financing the expenses of four community studies (see below) over a period of three years, greatly helped to establish the frame of research action within which the training of post-graduate research workers on an interdisciplinary basis could take place. Apart from this, the Council contributes towards the administrative expenses of the Institute.
- d) The Nuffield Foundation has offered to finance the services of an economic consultant, an appointment similar to that of Carnegie's American consultants. Although the University has so far been unable to secure a suitable appointment, the offer still stands.

This Foundation has also indicated its preparedness to consider supporting a social research project of considerable scope and originality; such a project is now being planned by the Institute and will probably involve the Departments of Psychology, Education and Social Anthropology.

The Nuffield Foundation has for some years sponsored a number of Research Fellowships for Africans, and a few of these are attached to this University and Institute.

Activities:

The Institute's activities fall into two closely related categories:-

First, the stimulation of teamwork on an interdisciplinary basis in problems of social research. Apart from the inter-university activities mentioned above, the Institute has provided a suitable frame within which the University's academic staff, advanced students and other scholars in the various social disciplines can meet and discuss problems of common interest, and so widen their horizon and deepen their perception.

Secondly, the Institute has also been a most useful vehicle for co-operative research action. The active research programme has been concentrated mainly on a series of community studies which have served as a field school for the Advanced Social Science Research Training Scheme mentioned above. They are:-

- a) Urban African Community: The study of the old Baumannville Location in Durban, completed as an interdisciplinary study in 1955 and published as a cyclostyled, joint Report by six research scholars, and edited by Professor Wilbur C. Hallenbeck. An abbreviated version of this report (by Mrs. A.M. Cowley) is being published by the Oxford University Press.

- b) Coloured Community: A two-man study (sociology, Mr. H.F. Dickie-Clark, and social psychology, Mr. J.W. Mann) of the Sparks Estate Community. Of narrower scope, but of deeper penetration than the Baumannville study, it deals with the vital problems of 'Marginal Status' and 'Marginal Personality'. The psychological part has been completed (August 1957); the sociological part may be completed by the end of 1958.
- c) Indian Community: The original concept of this study was abandoned in favour of a study, by an Indian post-graduate scholar, Mr. C. Ramphal, of scholastic performance and achievement of Indian schoolchildren in relation to certain environmental and linguistic factors. Fieldwork has been completed and the final results should be available by the end of 1958.
- d) Culturally Mixed Community: This is a sociological study by Miss M.J. Phillips, with one or two assistants, of a racially mixed (European, Indian, Coloured) neighbourhood in Durban, aimed at determining the effect of mixed-residence and social contacts on behaviour and attitudes. Fieldwork is in progress and the study is expected to be completed before the end of 1958.

These results are being achieved in the face of the Institute's most serious problem: the acute shortage and high turnover of suitable research workers.

Other projects are in various stages of preparation. Two of these are of an applied rather than fundamental nature:-

- a) A three-year socio-economic survey of Swaziland, due to start in January, 1958, will provide that Government with the necessary background data for its development plans. The study is financed from Colonial Development and Welfare funds;
- b) A multi-disciplinary survey of the vital Umgeni Catchment Area (hub of Natal's industrial life) in which the Institute hopes to participate with other University Departments, aims at assessing the area's potential resources and the best means of utilizing these. Financial support for this major scheme is being sought from Government and Municipal sources.

Of a fundamental nature will be a project on certain aspects of the development of African and Indian children which it is hoped will receive financial backing from the Nuffield Foundation.

A fourth project, largely fundamental, will deal with the Principles and practice of African Customary Law in Southern Africa. It has been submitted for approval to the National Council for Social Research.

The above programme promises a great deal of research activity and joint action during the next three or more years.

Facilities for Visiting Social Scientists:

The University of Natal, through the Institute for Social Research, would welcome accredited post-graduate scholars from universities and social research centres in the United States, Europe and the British Commonwealth, who may be looking for an exceptionally rich and varied field of human life and conflict in which to exercise their minds and skills as research workers, and on projects of their own choice if they so wish.

The Institute is able to provide introduction and ready access to what is probably one of the best 'social laboratories' anywhere for the study of multi-racial society in all its complexity. Durban itself houses 173,000 Europeans, 189,000 Africans, 206,000 Indians and 23,000 Coloureds, in all stages of cultural and economic development, in any variety of social environment, and of all occupational and professional shades.

Within an hour's distance of the industrial and commercial heart of the City begins the field of study of rural tribal society, stretching within half-a-day's travel into the very heart of under-developed Zululand and Pondoland. This means that within a radius of 100-150 miles every conceivable aspect of the vast and complex problems of acculturation and racial relations can be studied under 'laboratory' conditions. The field covers the full range from deeply rooted tribalism, primitive mysticism and subsistence economy, to urbanization, modern rationalism and western economics; from stubborn resistance to change to the headlong rush to adopt western values; from isolation to integration, and, ideologically, from flexible liberalism to rigid nationalism.

Indeed, it is doubtful whether any University is as well-placed for fundamental and applied research into the many facets of the vital problems of social, religious, political and economic transition.

The Institute cannot, unfortunately, offer to pay passages or other personal emoluments, but can make available the following important facilities:-

the consultative and supervisory services of a keen and research-minded academic and Institute staff;

library facilities, office accommodation and secretarial assistance;

the use of modern calculating, verifying and sorting equipment; some camping equipment and transport in the field may also be made available.

Further enquiries should be addressed to:

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I.S.R.
23/12/57.

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL
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DIRECTOR



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